

A Report from the **GIRL SCOUT RESEARCH INSTITUTE**

Voices of Volunteers 18-29



Executive Summary



Voices of Volunteers 18-29



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Harriet S. Mosatche, Ph.D.

Director, Girl Scout Research Institute
Michael Conn, Ph.D.

COMMISSIONED BY
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AUTHORS

Judy Schoenberg, Ed.M., *Senior Researcher*
Girl Scout Research Institute
Debra Pryor, M.B.A., M.S.A., *President and CEO*
Partners In Brainstorms, Inc.
Diane Hart, *Research Specialist*
Partners In Brainstorms, Inc.

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Inquiries related to the executive summary of *Voices of Volunteers 18-29* should be directed to the Girl Scout Research Institute, Girl Scouts of the USA, 420 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10018-2798.

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Introduction

In the spring of 2002, Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) commissioned a research study to understand why and how women 18-29 volunteer and how Girl Scouting can use that information to

mobilize a new pool of volunteers. *The Voices of Volunteers 18-29* report reflects eight main findings or “voices” that offer Girl Scouting a roadmap for action.

Research Background

An earlier study, *The Ten Emerging Truths: New Directions for Girls 11-17*, provided critical information regarding “top of mind” issues affecting girls today—including their preference for interacting with adults in program settings who were closer to them in age.

Recruiting young women as advisors and mentors reflects the commitment Girl Scouts has to meeting the needs of today’s girls, and for continuing to set the standard as the preeminent organization dedicated solely to girls.

Findings from *The Ten Emerging Truths*

Interactions with Adults. Thirty percent of the 1,500 preteen and teen girls who comprised the sample for *The Ten Emerging Truths* study expressed a preference for having college-age females as advisors or group leaders. Their second choice was to work with young female professionals (as advisors, mentors, role models and confidantes). Girls believed that volunteers who were closer to them in age would provide models for their own development, as well as personal insights about future options and choices.

Research Objectives

Voices of Volunteers was designed to address five key issues:

1. Explore the needs, motivations, and interests that volunteering satisfies and the challenges and benefits from the perspectives of women ages 18-29.
2. Identify factors that would maximize recruitment of this group.
3. Determine perceptions the target group has of Girl Scouts and of its current adult volunteers.
4. Identify common characteristics (e.g., demographic, motivations, volunteer experience, prior Girl Scout affiliation) among those interested in volunteering for Girl Scouts.
5. Gain insight to enhance the development and delivery system (e.g., training, council support, resources) for potential Girl Scout volunteers based on their needs and recommendations.

Sample and Methodology

Focus groups and an online survey were used to assess the motivations and interests of volunteers 18-29. The participants, who represented a diverse national sample, were all rigorously screened relative to ethnic/racial, geographic, and socio-economic backgrounds, and volunteering experiences. They also were screened regarding educational background, status as students (full-time/part-time), and terms of employment (full-time/part-time).

Qualitative Research—Focus groups

- The study included 18 focus groups of 165 female volunteers ages 18-29. Participants were divided into two age segments, 18-24 and 25-29, to account for the different stages of life issues.
- Focus groups were conducted from May-August 2002, in four markets—the New York metro area, Phoenix, St. Louis, and Atlanta. The sample consisted of young women who had volunteered for at least four hours within the six months prior to the interviews. Additionally, four Hispanic focus groups were conducted (two in the New York area and two in Phoenix).

Quantitative Research—Online survey

- A comprehensive 64-question survey was posted online from January through February 2003. The same screening criteria were used to ensure that online respondents paralleled the focus group sample.

- A total of 1,002 women participated in the survey; 452 between the ages of 18 and 24, and 550 between 25 and 29, representing 49 of the 50 states. Racial and ethnic background, as classified by the respondents (Which of the following ethnic groups do you consider yourself to be?), was 63 percent Caucasian, 15 percent African-American, 11 percent Hispanic, 6 percent multi-ethnic, 3 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, and 2 percent other. This national sample roughly mirrored the United States population of 18-29 year-olds based on the 2000 U.S. Census data.

- Of these, 41 percent had children; 49 percent were single; 34 percent married; 12 percent living with a partner; and 5 percent divorced. These percentages approximated the United States population on 18-29 year olds based on the 2000 U.S. Census data.

- In the sample, 49 percent had been Girl Scout members when they were young. Approximately 66 percent were members for one to four years; approximately 26 percent were members from five to eight years; and approximately 8 percent were members for nine+ years.

To ensure that perceptions about GSUSA did not influence responses or participation, the fact that GSUSA commissioned the study was not revealed to participants until the end of the survey and the focus groups. This accounts for dual references made to the program—at times referred to as simply the program and, in later sections, as STUDIO 2B_{sm}, the newly-launched Girl Scout program option for girls 11-17.

Study Highlights

Volunteering Is Part of Who I Am

Forty-three percent of participants in the study characterized their commitment to volunteering as an integral component of their personality, life task and self-image, summing it up as, “It’s who I am and what I do.”

It’s Our Tradition—Not a Trend

Prior life experiences, especially those in childhood, influence how likely adults are to volunteer. Over 60 percent of participants had volunteered as youth.

We Want to Work With Youth

Over 65 percent of all participants are currently engaged in volunteer activities, serving youth in educational institutions and youth development organizations.

We Can Make a Difference

Over 68 percent of study participants spoke of the personal rewards they derived from volunteering. Participants wanted to know that they could “be the person who makes a difference” for girls 11-17. For some, their perception that Girl Scout members were not “disadvantaged” made them believe that those girls did not need more adults in their lives.

We’ll Volunteer if it Works For Us

Requirements for a successful volunteer experience include the following:

- Flexible schedule
- Contemporary program that addresses substantive issues of adolescence today

- Clearly defined roles
- Opportunities that match volunteers’ interests
- A welcoming environment
- Reimbursement for out of pocket expenses
- Training, mentoring and other support services
- Structured opportunities through employers/educational institutions

We Can Inspire Young Girls and Teens

Eighty-six percent of volunteers in the study expressed interest in sharing their life experiences with girls 11-17, and many believe they are uniquely qualified to talk to girls about tough issues (such as peer pressure, dating, body image, violence).

We Want to Reach Across Generations

Seventy-three percent of volunteers in the study think that having a mentor themselves is as important for them as it is for the girls.

We Want To Be Where We’re Wanted and Needed

Eighty-six percent of all study participants said that knowing that girls, and specifically teens, asked to have young women like themselves as advisors was a motivation to volunteer.



Summary of Findings

A Look at Today's Volunteers: Profile of a Generation

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there are approximately 9.3 million women between 25 and 29 years of age, 9.2 million between 20 and 24, and 9.8 million between the ages of 15 and 19—a vast pool of potential volunteers.

The majority of these young women are part of a generation that is described as extremely diverse,

independent, and entrepreneurial. They are also often depicted as feeling stressed by the pressures of school, career, family, hobbies, and “making it on their own.” Their sense of community is found in social networks of family, friends, and peers, the communities in which they live, and in the feelings evoked in seeing their personal values and convictions reflected in a particular cause or organization.

Volunteering Is Part of Who I Am

Central to Self-Image

Eighty-five percent of the young women in this study described volunteerism as a part of their personality, part of their life's task, and part of what they perceive as an obligation to make a difference.

They are receptive to helping those less fortunate and are flexible in how they reach out to others—whether on the “front lines” (e.g. providing direct services) or “behind the scenes” (e.g. administrative work). **Volunteerism is viewed as a lifelong commitment, a “call to action” that is engrained in how they see themselves.** For example, volunteerism through colleges/sororities was highest among African-Americans (25 percent), participation through the workplace was highest among Hispanic (26 percent), and participation through their child's school/PTA was highest among Caucasian volunteers (21 percent).

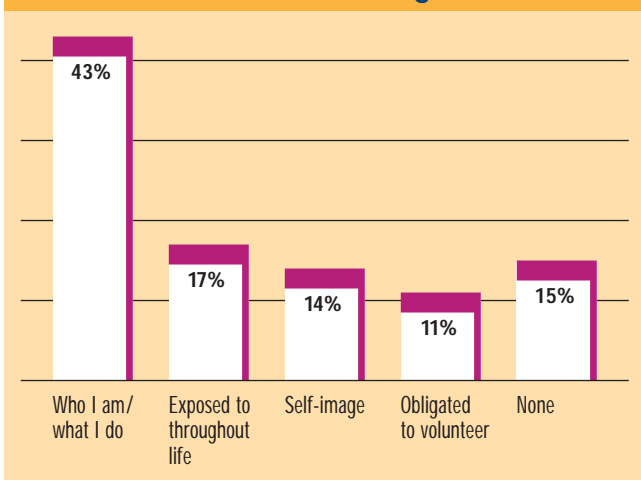
“I just volunteer...it's part of who I am. I don't really think about why I do it or what I'm doing it for. I just go and enjoy the time I have volunteering.”

—Emily, age 20

“It's part of what I do—that's my community and I want to help young people because they're going to be the future adults of my city. So, it's like it's my duty.”

—Olivia, age 21

How would you characterize your commitment to volunteering?



Question from online survey, Jan. 24–Feb. 28, 2003, with 1,002 volunteers 18–29 responding.

It's Our Tradition—Not a Trend

Volunteerism Rooted in Childhood

In both the focus groups and online survey, volunteers spoke of a “tradition of volunteering” that was rooted in their childhood experiences. Over 60 percent had volunteered during childhood – 66 percent of those ages 18-24, and 60 percent of those 25-29.

“I really can’t remember the first time I volunteered...it really was just a way of life for us. I do remember in the 7th grade volunteering to walk an old lady’s dog around the block every day because she couldn’t get around.”

—**Esmeralda**, age 23

Seventy-one percent of college graduates had volunteered when younger, and 76 percent of those who attended graduate school. Among those whose highest level of education was high school or some college, 55-60 percent reported volunteering when young.

“Really, volunteering is second nature to a lot of people. We’ve grown up around it and with it all of our lives.”

—**Shatisha**, age 28

“My grandmother was a philanthropist. And seeing what she did for the community and our family-it just helped me to realize that it (volunteering) was passed down to me...it’s just something that comes naturally.”

—**Vittoria**, age 26

Most fueling their interest in volunteerism are family values (43 percent), spiritual beliefs and/or involvement in religious or church groups (33 per-

cent), and the feelings of gratification derived from volunteering as youth (33 percent). Other influences included career interests, jobs, friends, and earlier involvement in youth and teen organizations.

“I think the first thing that I remember is that my dad was a basketball coach. We put on a basketball camp in the inner city.... That was really impressionable for me at that age.”

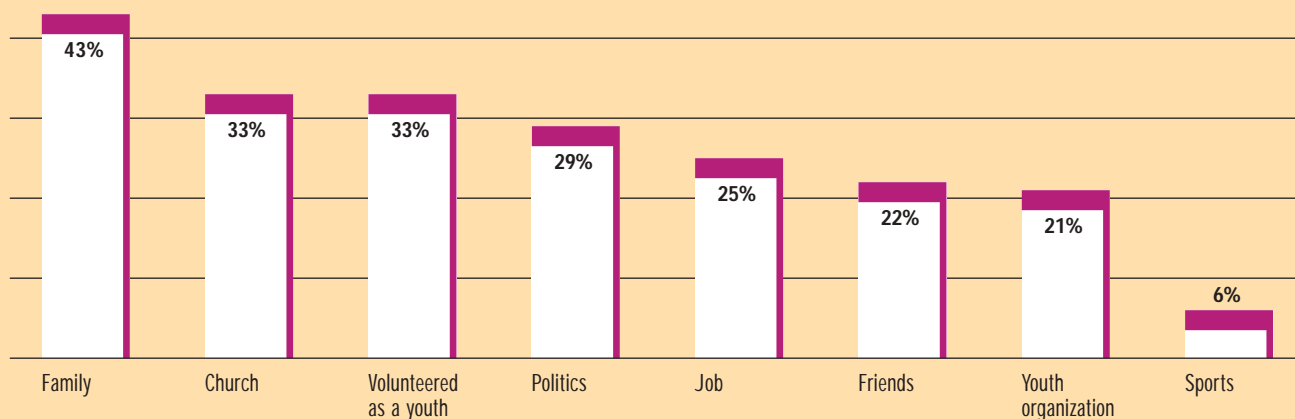
—**Kerrie**, age 19

In describing their history of volunteerism, participants spoke of care-giving and fundraising efforts aimed at helping children, the elderly, and their communities. Most common were school-sponsored (including grade school, high school, college and/or sorority sponsored activities) and/or required community service projects. Eighty-one percent described participating in food and clothing drives and working with children and/or the elderly. Approximately 59 percent recalled volunteer work performed through religious and youth church groups, while 52 percent recalled work performed through organizations such as Girl Scouts and 4-H. Another 45 percent described assisting family and friends who were involved in volunteer projects.

“I think it was 8th grade and it was one of the things that you had to do for confirmation. I worked with little kids about 4 or 5 years old. I did it every Sunday morning...stayed until the end of the semester even though I only had to do it for a certain amount of time.”

—**Claudine**, age 27

My interest in volunteering as an adult has been most significantly influenced by...



Question from online survey, Jan. 24–Feb. 28, 2003, with 1,002 volunteers 18–29 responding.

"I was involved with the Girl Scouts and Brownies. We had the volunteer badges so we would go to a lot of nursing homes. I went to a Catholic school, so in order for us to get to sixth grade, we had to do volunteer work first. That was all the way through middle school and high school."

—Karla, age 28

Forty-nine percent of volunteers had belonged to Girl Scouts, with the highest percentage among those ages 25-29 (53 percent) compared to 45 percent of those 18-24. **Of those who did belong to Girl Scouts, 48 percent attributed their first volunteer experience to their involvement in Girl Scouts. This group of volunteers represents 24 percent of the total sample.**

We Want to Work With Youth

Close to 80 percent of volunteers, across all age, ethnic, and economic groups, voiced a desire to work with and support the causes of children and youth. This interest is most pronounced among African-American volunteers (88 percent), compared to Caucasians (78 percent) and Hispanics (77 percent).

Over 71 percent of volunteers reported that they were engaged in activities serving youth under the age of 18 within the past six months. This is highest among African-American volunteers (78 percent), followed by Hispanic (71 percent) and Caucasian (69 percent) volunteers.

"...I started when I was in high school volunteering with Family Support Services in a summer day camp

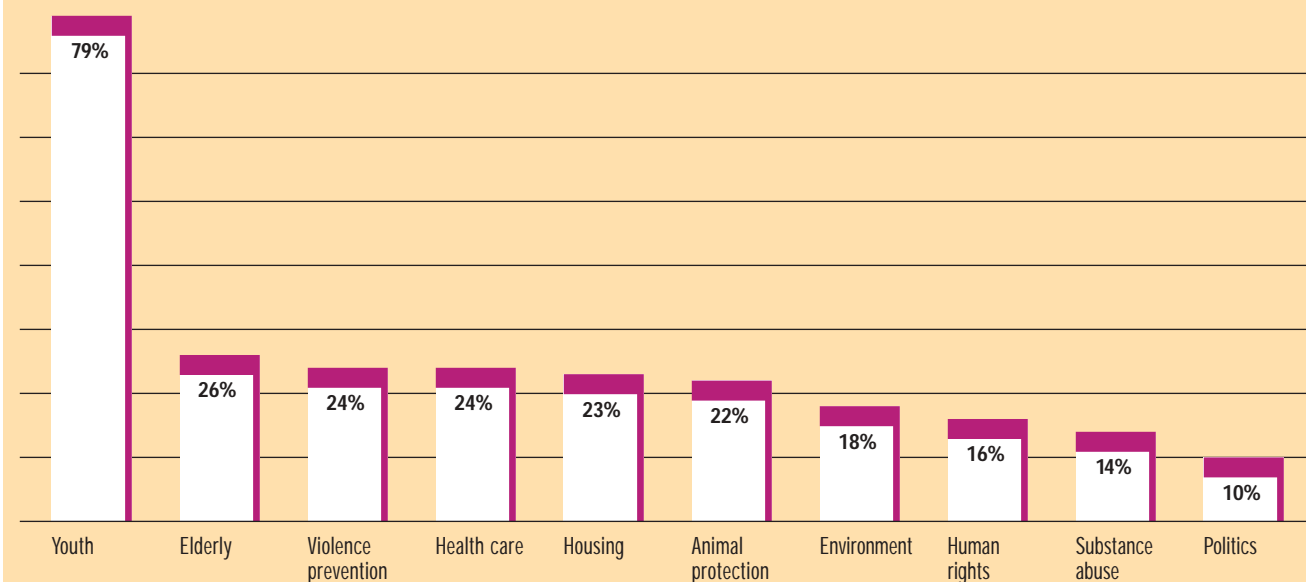
with teenagers with developmental delays... Some of the kids that I started working with 10 years ago, I'm still working with...we've kind of grown together."

—Katie, age 25

Reconnecting with Volunteer Organizations

Most participants said they would strongly consider "reconnecting with those organizations they volunteered with when young if the organization's mission, purpose, and activities reflected their current interests." With 40 percent very likely to reconnect, and another 49 percent willing to consider doing so, the importance of matching personal and organizational interests is apparent.

What issues or causes are you most likely to support through volunteering?



Question from online survey, Jan. 24–Feb. 28, 2003, with 1,002 volunteers 18–29 responding.

“...you need to help those kids go through what you went through...you’re a role model for them and you’re volunteering so that they will volunteer to help someone else. It’s kind of like a chain.”

—**Laura**, age 22

“I think it’s more meaningful when you identify with the people that you’re working with...if you see...that most underprivileged kids are from a minority group, you tend to volunteer more...because you’re part of that group too, you would try to help out more.”

—**Regina**, age 23

Participation in Girl Scouts and the study participants’ first volunteer experience differed by ethnic groups as follows:

- Seventy percent of Hispanics did not belong to Girl Scouts. Of the 30 percent who did belong, 68 percent attributed their first volunteer experience to Girl Scouting.
- Sixty-two percent of African Americans did not belong to Girl Scouts. Of the 38 percent who did, 56 percent attributed their first volunteer experience to Girl Scouting.
- Forty-four percent of Caucasians did not belong to Girl Scouts. Of the 56 percent who did, 47 percent attributed their first volunteer experience to Girl Scouting.

Not surprisingly, volunteers who had children were more likely to reconnect with organizations they had been involved with when they were young so their children would benefit from their volunteerism, setting into a motion a “life stages cycle” of volunteering.

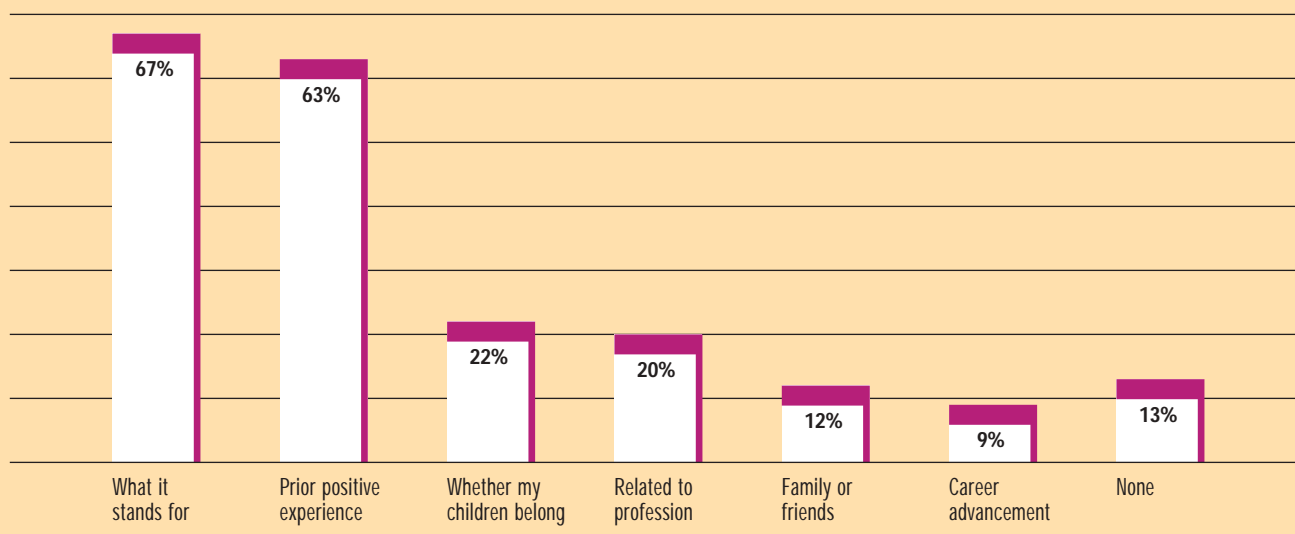
“I did (reconnect). I was a Girl Scout until I was a Cadette. . .I just rejoined as a leader because of my daughter. My mother was never a leader, but I just felt that there was a good connection to build a mother/daughter relationship.”

—**Melissa**, age 25

Both Hispanic (53 percent) and African-American (50 percent) volunteers stated that they “were likely” to reconnect with organizations that they had volunteered with when young. Caucasian volunteers were less committed, with 35 percent stating that they “were likely” to reconnect and 53 percent stating that they “might consider” doing so.

Throughout focus group discussions and online research, Girl Scouts was most commonly cited as an organization the young women would reconnect with. **In fact, over 80 percent of volunteers who were former Girl Scouts expressed interest in volunteering to become an advisor for a Girl Scout program that focused on preteens and teens.** Motivating factors for volunteering included their own positive experiences as Girl Scouts and that the current program would meet the needs of today’s preteen and teen girls.

If you were to consider reconnecting with one of these organizations, which of the following factors would play a major role in your decision to become an adult volunteer?



Question from online survey, Jan. 24–Feb. 28, 2003, with 1,002 volunteers 18–29 responding.

We Can Make a Difference

"It's kind of like the reason that I chose nursing as my field, when you know that you're helping people, you feel like you have a purpose. I'm sure that something that you do when you volunteer does make an impact on someone. Even if it may not show like it does, it really does."

—Mary Grace, age 21

In fulfilling the need to serve, volunteers feel gratified by the experience and empowered by their ability to effect change—often resulting in an enhanced self-image.

"It's just people being there at the right time and saying something to somebody... Just giving your time to them can change their lives and change yours."

—Jamie, age 19

"You just feel good about yourself. Like 99 percent of the time people will show you how much they appreciate

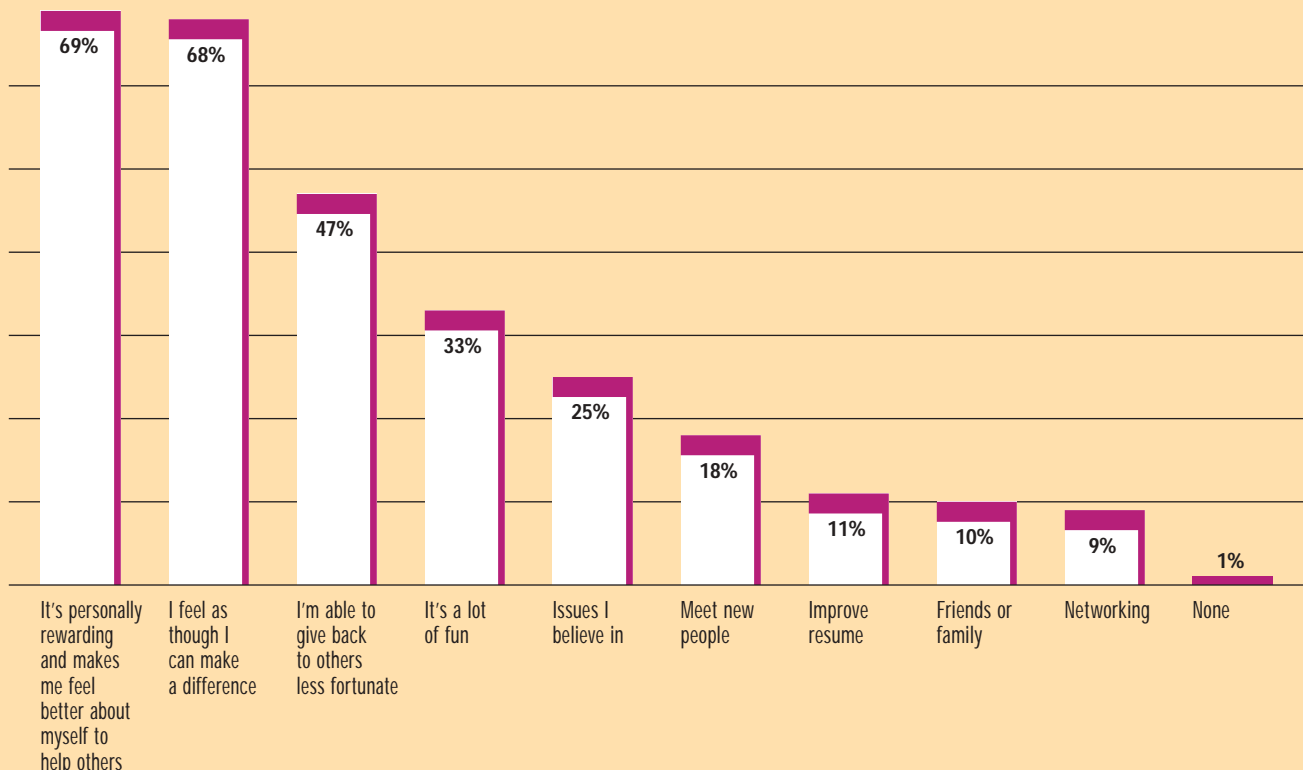
the time that you've given them. Whether it is the organization leader that you're hooking up with, or the actual individuals who you're helping or volunteering with."

—Lori, age 19

When asked to identify the top three motivations that inspired them to volunteer, 69 percent noted the personal reward they derived and of feeling better about themselves. Sixty-eight percent said feeling as though they could make a difference and 47 percent took pride in feeling they were able to give back to those less fortunate.

Other benefits of volunteering included having fun (33 percent), taking a stand on issues they believe in (25 percent), and meeting new people and networking with individuals with similar interests (18 percent).

Based on your personal experiences, choose the top three motivations that have inspired you to volunteer.



Question from online survey, Jan. 24–Feb. 28, 2003, with 1,002 volunteers 18–29 responding.

More single volunteers favored benefits associated with skill development and resume building (12 percent) than did married volunteers (8 percent), and more married volunteers favored the benefits

associated with involving family and friends in volunteering experiences (12 percent) than did single volunteers (8 percent).

We'll Volunteer if it Works for Us

Forty-nine percent of all participants, in rating what matters most to them, cited the importance of a flexible schedule. This was highest among volunteers who currently are employed (53 percent) and was 46 percent for students.

"I need more flexibility. There were two situations where I was willing to volunteer, and I wanted to help out, but I just didn't have the time to do it the way that they wanted me to do it. So I just didn't bother doing it at all."

—Nancy, age 26

Barriers to Connection: What Gets in the Way

When asked to identify obstacles to becoming actively engaged in volunteering, 72 percent cited a lack of time and 30 percent cited being unaware of opportunities. For many focus group participants,

making a commitment that they might not be able to honor was a major concern, especially with changing school schedules, job searches, career demands, and the dynamics of family life.

"I don't have routines or patterns in my life so it would be hard to fit volunteering in...it wouldn't be fair to sign up for something like that and know that you couldn't follow through."

—Katie, age 28

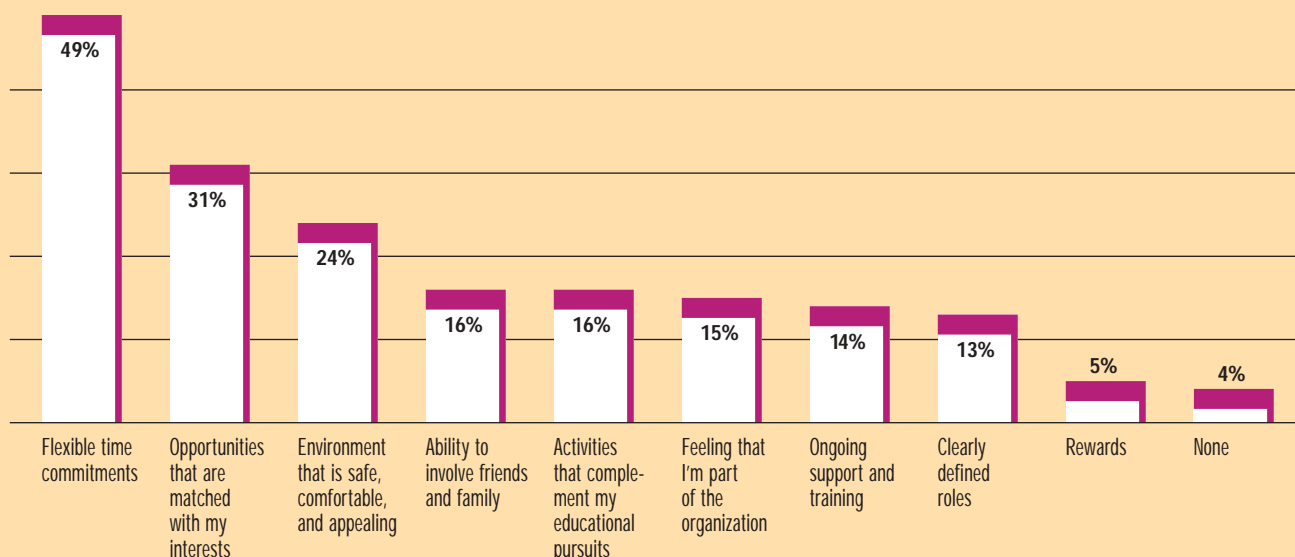
"I work full-time and I have a three-year-old and then having to take time to do something else, I feel that I'm taking time away from my son that I should be spending with him."

—Tahesha, age 26

"I know friends who have to pay for their college so they have to work a lot during the week and plus with their school work, they literally don't have the time."

—Danielle, age 18

Overall, a positive volunteering opportunity offers...



Question from online survey, Jan. 24–Feb. 28, 2003, with 1,002 volunteers 18–29 responding.

Participants identified the main obstacles to volunteering as a lack of awareness (27 percent), relative to information and resources, and not enough flexibility (25 percent). Among volunteers 25-29, time demands were of slightly greater concern, with 76 percent referencing family and child-rearing responsibilities, as compared to 68 percent of volunteers 18-24.

"A lot of people don't volunteer because they don't know where to go. They don't really have the information or the resources. A lot of people would love to help out, but they don't where to start. I think that's a big part of it."

—**Felicia**, age 23

We Can Inspire Girls and Teens

Advisors, Mentors, and Responsible Friends

When asked if they would consider becoming an advisor for a nationwide program offered by Girl Scouts, 83 percent of African-Americans, 80 percent of Hispanics, and 78 percent of Caucasian women indicated that they would. Among age groups, there were no differences, with 79 percent of young women 18-24 and 25-29 expressing interest in volunteering.

The concept of STUDIO 2B_{sm} was introduced as an example of a contemporary program for girls 11-17, focusing on the four B's: *Become*, *Belong*, *Believe*, and

Build (an interpretation of the four pillars of the Girl Scout program). Volunteers enthusiastically embraced these goals, with 98 percent stating they are relevant and empowering to today's younger girls and teens.

"I like it simply because it's something that I already do. It's something that's so needed. Just for girls to have that type of outlet and to be able to talk and make changes to kind of empower themselves."

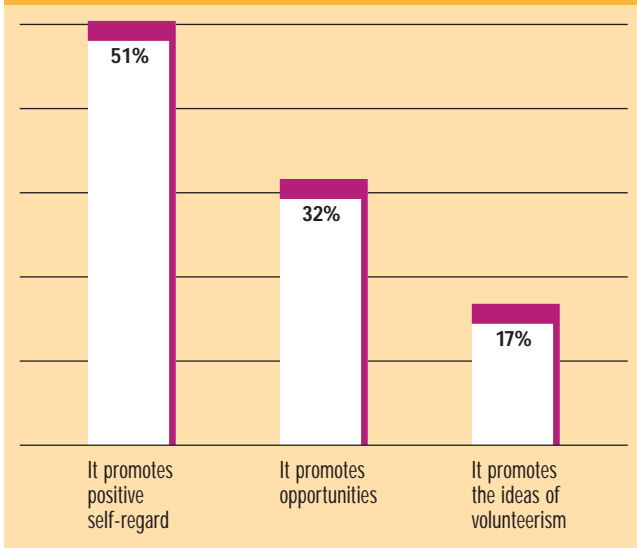
—**Disha**, age 28

In fact, 51 percent of volunteers feel that the most appealing aspect of the program is that it enhances and promotes positive self-regard. Thirty-two percent relish the opportunity to serve as a mentor, and 17 percent feel that the program personifies volunteerism at its best.

"I always told the girls that I work with to celebrate yourself first...That's very important for this age group to look inside yourself first and figure out what you need to do and who you are."

—**Tara**, age 28

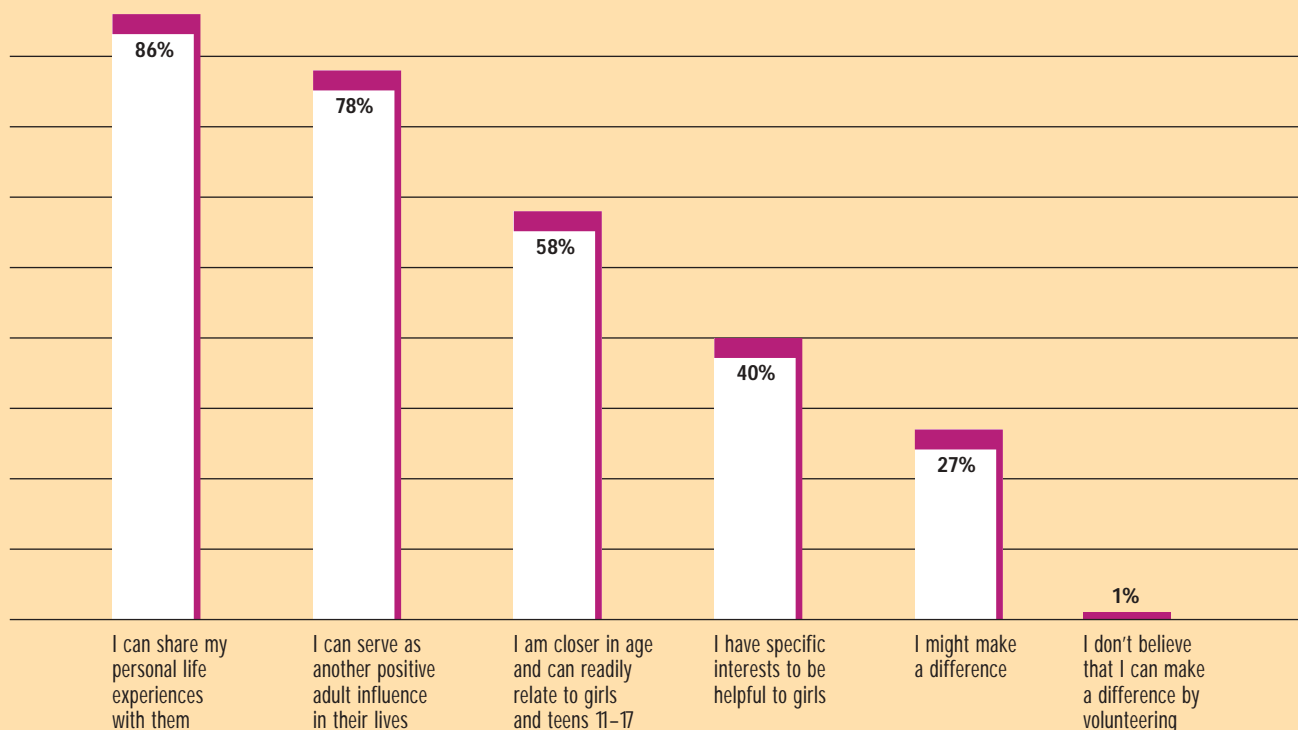
Which one of the following program benefits is most appealing to you?



Question from online survey, Jan. 24–Feb. 28, 2003, with 1,002 volunteers 18–29 responding.

Volunteers described an advisory role as being akin to that of a mentor, “big sister,” and/or “a responsible friend” who can provide girls and teens with a “line of vision” to future opportunities. They believe their contributions include an ability to share personal life experiences (86 percent), to serve as positive role models and adult influences (76 percent), to “connect” with girls and teens (58 percent), and to share their interests and skills (40 percent). And not to be understated is the recognition by 27 percent of volunteers of the value to be found in “simply being there.”

What do you feel are the primary benefits or contributions that you, as a young woman volunteer, can offer to girls and teens 11–17?



Question from online survey, Jan. 24–Feb. 28, 2003, with 1,002 volunteers 18–29 responding.

“Girls in this age group need someone closer to their age to talk to. Someone they can look up to, but not feel like it’s a mother or father figure. Someone that they can trust. And know that they won’t get scolded.”

—**Aileen**, age 26

“When I was that age, I didn’t have an older sister and I figured things out, but sometimes I wished there was somebody I could talk to besides my mom.”

—**Shannon**, age 19

We Want to Reach Across Generations

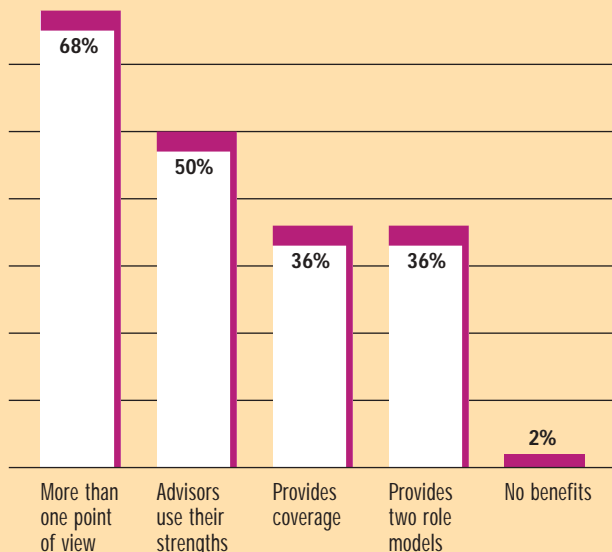
Building Relationships

Volunteers are receptive to forming mentoring relationships with older women. They believe they can benefit from the insights, wisdom, and life experiences of these women and view such relationships as beneficial to themselves and the girls in the program. While looking to mentors for advice and support, volunteers hope to instill in teens an appreciation for the wisdom that comes with age—the life lessons that give shape and substance to “who we are today” and “who we aspire to be.”

Though volunteers noted a distinct preference for the option to either work alone or with a co-advisor, 59 percent favored working with a co-worker at various times. Thirty-five percent wanted to work with a co-advisor at all times, and 6 percent preferred to work alone.

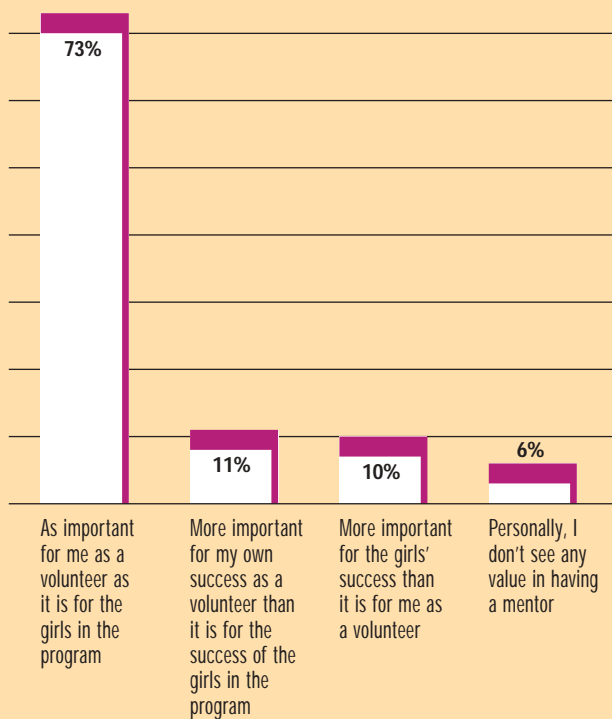
Volunteers consistently spoke of the need to address the issue of diversity and to instill in girls an appreciation for differences. Over 50 percent of volunteers felt it was important that girls be exposed to different personalities, viewpoints, and ways of interacting.

What are the primary benefits of having a co-advisor?



Question from online survey, Jan. 24–Feb. 28, 2003, with 1,002 volunteers 18–29 responding.

In thinking about the value of having a woman 30+ years of age as a mentor (to help guide and assist you), which of the following statements best reflects your point of view?



Question from online survey, Jan. 24–Feb. 28, 2003, with 1,002 volunteers 18–29 responding.

According to volunteers, a benefit of working with an older advisor was an opportunity to expose the girls to more than one point of view—to provide more “balance in leadership” and that sometimes “two heads are better than one.” And 35 percent agreed that the need for backup coverage was yet another reason to have team advisors. Less than two percent of volunteers felt that there was no value in having co-advisors.

When asked whether or not they would want to work with a co-advisor who was somewhat like themselves or somewhat different, 63 percent said they preferred to work with someone *different* from themselves. This was slightly higher among volunteers 25–29 (67 percent) than among those 18–24 (59 percent).

Volunteers also said they preferred to work with someone within 5–10 years of their own age. Those 18–24 were almost evenly split on working with someone within 5 years of their age (45 percent) or within 5–10 years (47 percent) of their age. The majority of those 25–29 (59 percent) preferred to work with someone within 5–10 years of their age.

“Working with a co-advisor would provide more of a complete package. Then the girls can relate to each of you differently.”

—**Keisha**, age 28

“It gives balance. I think when two different people come together, they can...bounce ideas off of each other.”

—**Jamie**, age 29

“I think it's really important for girls to see that it's okay to be different. I don't have to be like my friend. Just because she thinks this way and she has this view, I don't have to be like her.”

—**Kristin**, age 20

Valuing the Insight and Wisdom of Mentors

A desire to be paired with a female mentor 30 years and older was cited by a higher percentage of volunteers who were students (17 percent) than by those who were employed (10 percent).

“I think that even people our age (18–29) need to have contact with people who are older. There's just wisdom

with age. I think we should have mentors, if possible. And then we can help bridge that gap with the younger kids too. Even if it's not a direct mentoring relationship with older women."

—**Keita**, age 27

"I have mentors that are older, but I didn't appreciate them until I started getting older."

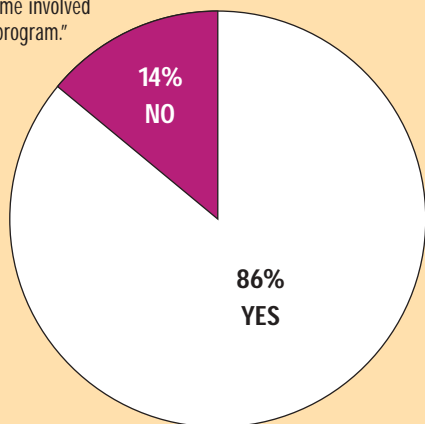
—**Alicia**, age 25

We Want to Be Where We're Needed and Valued

The departure from "traditional" Girl Scout programming was viewed as instrumental in mobilizing young women to volunteer. Approximately 90 percent of volunteers in each ethnic group felt it would have been beneficial if they had had a program that addressed real life issues when they were young. Being asked to provide preteen and teen girls with guidance on such issues was a motivation to volunteer.

As a prospective volunteer, does it make a difference to you to know that girls and teens specifically asked to have young women like yourself involved in this program?

NO. "I mean it's nice to know that the girls want us, but it really doesn't make a difference in whether or not I become involved with this program."



YES. "It makes me feel needed and wanted. It also motivates me to learn more about the program and to seriously consider volunteering whatever time I can to it."

Question from online survey, Jan. 24–Feb. 28, 2003, with 1,002 volunteers 18–29 responding.

When asked if a direct request from girls 11-17 to work with young advisors made any difference to them, 86 percent of volunteers across all ethnic groups stated that it did! Volunteers consistently expressed a strong desire to feel they were "making a difference," and knowing that the girls wanted them was perceived as both self-affirming and validating.

"I think it's good to know that girls 11-17 want someone our age. I never really thought of it."

—**Kelly**, age 28

"I think my volunteering basically teaches them to volunteer, too. It's kind of like a cycle. You advise them and then they learn to participate in something that they care about—so that they can do the same thing that you're doing, making a difference."

—**Susan**, age 28

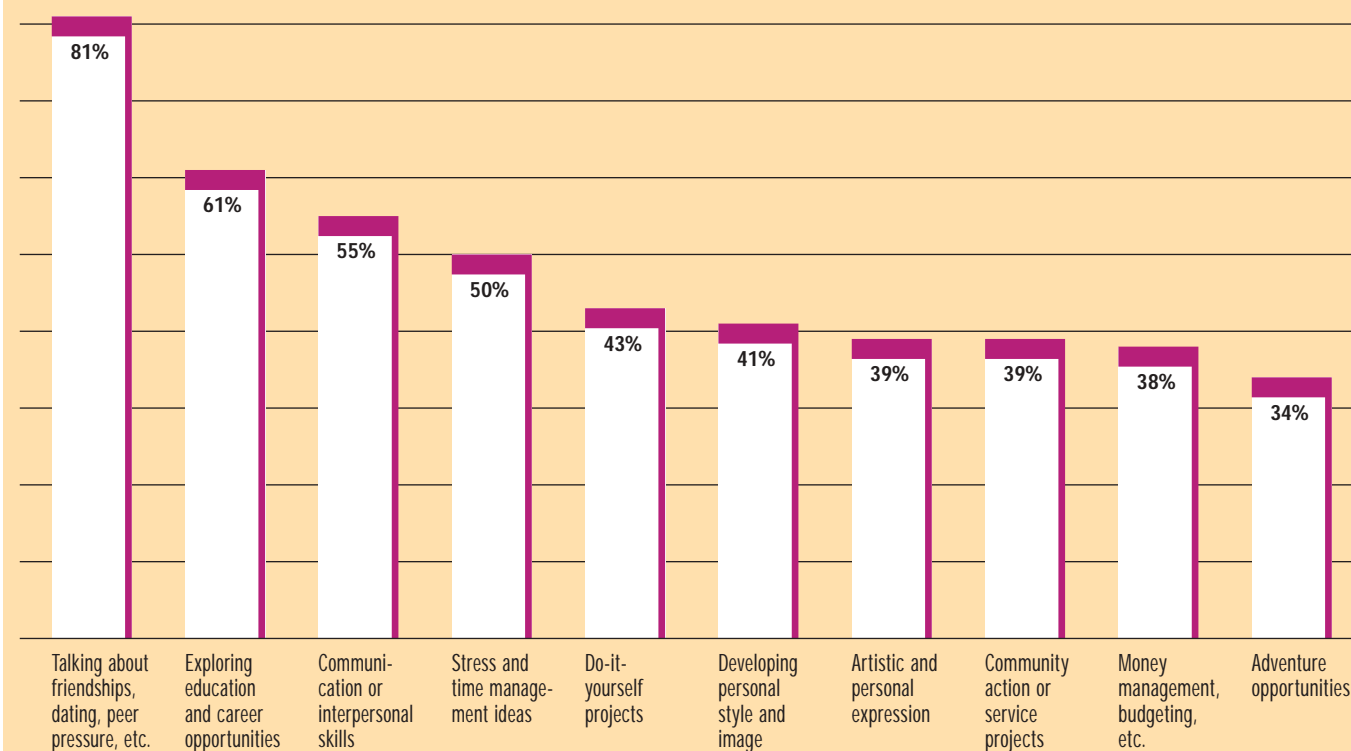
Making a Contribution: Volunteer Skills and Interests

Approximately 81 percent of the study participants expressed an interest in talking about adolescent issues such as friendships, peer pressure, dating, and other topics related to self-image and socialization. This was followed by an interest in helping girls and teens explore education and career opportunities (61 percent), improving their communication and interpersonal skills (55 percent), and providing information on stress and time management (50 percent). Over 40 percent expressed an interest in working with teens on matters related to personal growth and development, education and career interests, do-it-yourself projects, and personal image.

"I think self-esteem builders...activities are really good at that age. At that age, not only is your body changing completely, but you're doubting yourself"

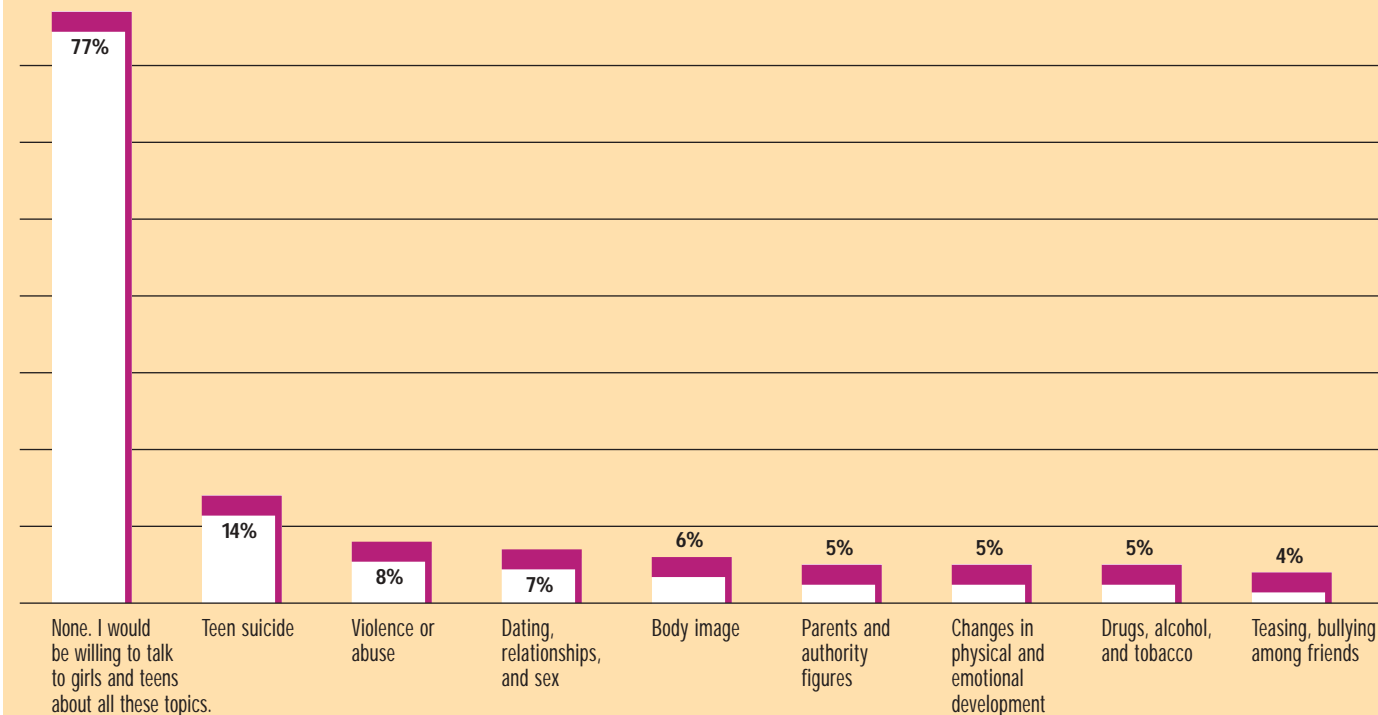
—**Kristen**, age 21

Which of the following topics do you have a personal interest in and might enjoy helping girls and teens learn more about?



Question from online survey, Jan. 24–Feb. 28, 2003, with 1,002 volunteers 18–29 responding.

Indicate which, if any, of the following topics you would not feel comfortable talking about...



Question from online survey, Jan. 24–Feb. 28, 2003, with 1,002 volunteers 18–29 responding.

"I think because whatever changes they're going through in their bodies, I can kind of relate to. Or whatever things that are going wrong in their life, maybe it's things that I went through at that age."

—Debra, age 28

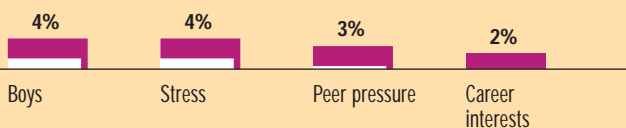
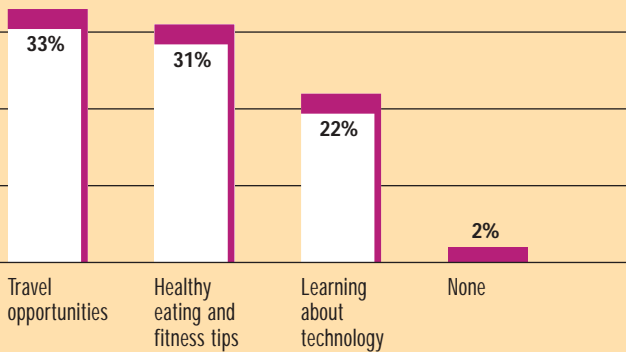
Addressing "Tough" Issues

Talking to teens about issues many volunteers had faced in adolescence was part of the contribution these young women were especially hoping to make. **Seventy-seven percent of volunteers said they would feel comfortable discussing any of the topics presented, including physical and emotional development, social relationships and stressors—not a "traditional" role for most adult Girl Scout volunteers who are more used to functioning as "leaders" than as advisors.**

Fifty-seven percent indicated they would be comfortable working with girls of any age between 11-17 to discuss substantive issues. When presented with age category groupings, 20 percent of volunteers expressed a preference to work with teens 15-17, 7 percent with teens 13-15, and 14 percent with girls 11-13.

Issues that volunteers felt most uncomfortable discussing were teen suicide (14 percent); violence and abuse (8 percent); dating, relationships, and sex (7 percent); and body image (6 percent)—mostly because of legal and/or liability concerns (61 percent), parental response (59 percent), and lack of in-depth knowledge and training.

Volunteers favored a collaborative process in which the group is asked for their input and involved in planning the activities and events. This was viewed as an effective way to teach younger girls and teens about responsibility and accountability, while also respecting their needs and preferences.





Program Implications

Recognition: Incentives and Perks

“How is it volunteering if you’re getting paid for it? That makes no sense. The word volunteer means you give to the community.” —Angela, age 26

Volunteers were adamant that they did not expect or want to be compensated for their time. They did, however, raise the issue of reimbursement for “out-of-pocket” expenses, with 58 percent favoring a budget or stipend and 24 percent direct reimbursement for expenses incurred.

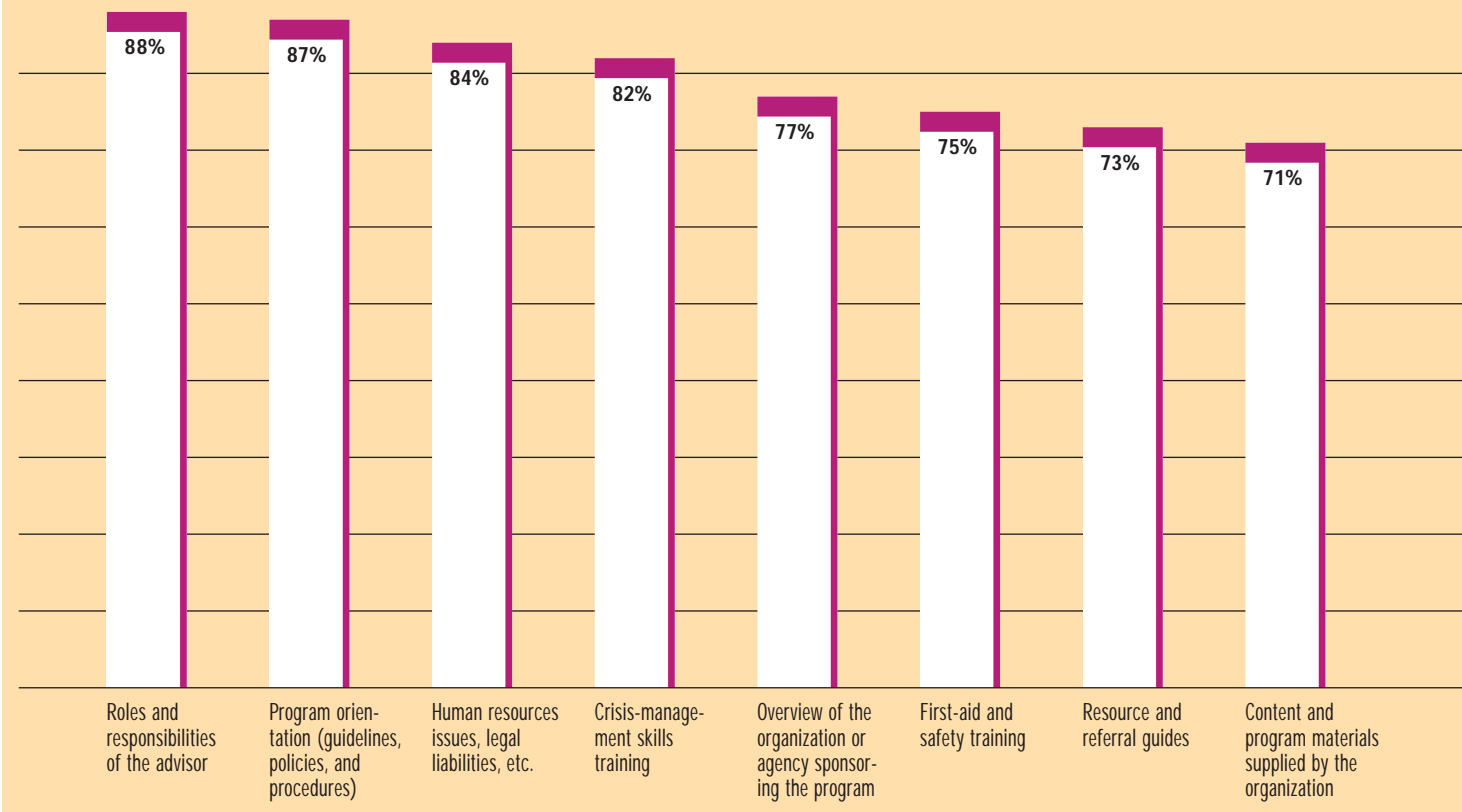
In the online study, 81 percent said that incentives or perks might be a nice gesture but were not

required or expected, and 13 percent felt that they should not be given – “if you’re volunteering, you’re volunteering.” Only 5 percent believed that incentives or perks were both necessary and required.

Meeting Locations and Schedules

Volunteers noted that meeting places should be in neutral, safe, and comfortable locations, and that structure and regularly scheduled meetings allowed advisors to build trust, rapport, and credibility with the girls in their groups. Preferred locations include schools, meeting halls, and gyms – places that welcome girls from all religious, ethnic, and cultural

What topics should be included in a training program for advisors?



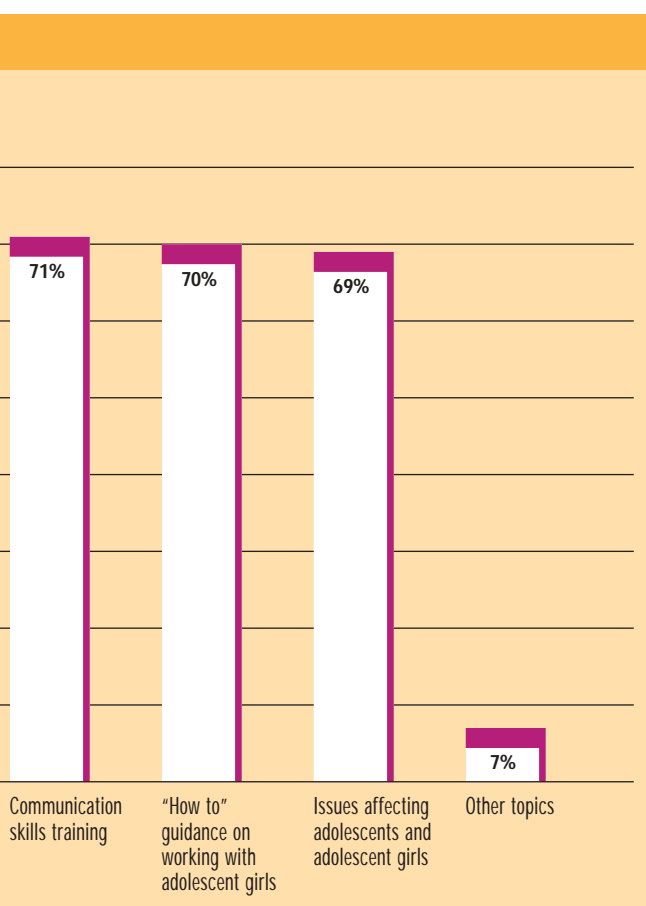
Question from online survey, Jan. 24–Feb. 28, 2003, with 1,002 volunteers 18–29 responding.

backgrounds-but they did not feel that it was appropriate to meet in someone's home. Being available and accessible for one-to-one interactions and for extended activities was also viewed as a key program component.

"I thought that it was really important that you volunteer with the same group a lot...you can't just have people coming one day here and one day there. You have to make the commitment to be with the girls for at least a few months."

—**Latasha**, age 23

In the online study, 57 percent of volunteers favored a regularly scheduled meeting time. This was highest among volunteers with children (62 percent) compared to those without children (54 percent). Another 43 percent favored a more flexible arrangement, participating in a talent bank or assisting the organization as a guest speaker, workshop leader, or working behind-the-scenes. A higher percentage of volunteers 25-29 and those who were employed (both at 28 percent) preferred to be part of a talent bank, as compared to volunteers 18-24 and those who were students (both at 21 percent).



Identifying Training Needs

Critical training needs centered on the roles and responsibilities of the advisor (88 percent), program orientation (87 percent), human resources and legal liability issues (84 percent), and crisis-management skills (82 percent). Volunteers want the most current and accurate information on developmental and societal issues impacting younger girls and teens. This includes information on alcoholism and drug abuse, eating disorders, teen suicide, self-esteem and socialization, life-skills training, and education and career options.

"You need to know...where 11- to 13-year-olds should be, or a 13- to 15-year-old. The psychology of it is very important."

—**Randi**, age 20

"It's so hard...there are going to be some serious things that will be discussed, like sex and boys, and how do I feel about this and that. They're not talking about it with anybody at home, so they need it somewhere."

—**Brandie**, age 24

Volunteers also want to have a clear understanding of expectations, program guidelines, and their roles and responsibilities when it comes to handling sensitive and/or potentially serious matters that could have legal ramifications. Emergency and safety training also were identified as crucial training needs.

"There could be legal questions that come up...with very serious legal repercussions."

—**Abbie**, age 24

A number of volunteers spoke of the need and benefit associated with screening volunteer applicants.

"The people who are being the mentors should be assessed and continually assessed. And they should get feedback. Like teachers at school, you fill out evaluations on them."

—**Shanetta**, age 22

"I think some kind of counseling curriculum and background screening is needed to see that you're an open, understanding person, what your childhood was like and what you've been exposed to, so that they can match you up to these young girls."

—**Kimber**, age 25

Support Services for Volunteers

Volunteers suggested establishing a support network for advisors, including periodic meetings, workshops, and conferences, e-mail notifications and updates, and a Web site portal containing program and resource information.

One of the most prevalent needs, as noted by 56 percent of volunteers, is for periodic meetings with organization/program staff and other advisors. In addition, face-to-face contact via workshops and conferences (38 percent), a buddy system for new advisors (29 percent), an emergency contact list (42 percent), and direct phone access to the organization (30 percent) are preferred over traditional resources such as reference books, videos, and newsletters.

Opportunities to access information via a Web site was ranked by 28 percent of volunteers as an effective vehicle for disseminating information and providing advisors nationwide with a direct means of communicating. In focus group discussions, suggestions were made for the type of information that should be housed on the Web site. These included information about the organization and program as well as information on how to become a volunteer. Suggestions for the “advisors only” link included advisor success stories, a speaker’s bureau, chat room, and a bulletin board for questions and topics of interest to advisors.

Interest in the Program

Prior to in-depth discussions about the program, 51 percent of the participants indicated they were interested in learning more about the program and volunteer opportunities. Another 40 percent did not know if they would be interested, but did want to hear more about the program. After detailed discussions about what a contemporary program for girls would look like, 90 percent indicated they were motivated to work with preteen and teen girls, and 80 percent said they would consider volunteering as an advisor.

Benefits of Girl Scout Sponsorship

After being told of GSUSA sponsorship of STUDIO 2B_{sm}, 79 percent of volunteers said they would consider becoming advisors. Sixty percent attributed their interest to how contemporary the program is. Another 42 percent were pleased to know that they

could contribute something to the program, and 27 percent wanted to volunteer because they would have liked a similar program when they were younger.

“My daughter just turned 11 and she has 10 people in her troop and only 4 are coming back next year. She’s going into junior high and it’s so un-cool to be a Girl Scout.”
—**Miriam**, age 29

“That’s why this would be perfect. The after the Girl Scouts phase.”
—**Mary**, age 29

Perceptions of “Traditional” Girl Scouts

Though the majority of volunteers had positive feelings about Girls Scouts, approximately 20 percent had less favorable impressions, believing, for example, that the girls most in need of this program (addressing the concerns of today’s young girls and teens) were not being served. This perception was cited as a reason for being unwilling to volunteer.

Another reason for being reluctant to volunteer for Girl Scouts was the perception that it is too “traditional.” Thirty-two percent of volunteers said they associated the organization with camping, cookie sales, and badges. Another 28 percent said they associated Girl Scout volunteers primarily with the mothers of Girl Scout members; 26 percent said Girl Scouts is geared towards younger girls, and 22 percent believe the organization is “out of date and out of touch” with issues facing girls today. Even so, over 75 percent of all participants indicated an interest in volunteering. This was highest among African-Americans (83 percent), followed by Hispanics (80 percent) and Caucasians (78 percent).

Recruiting, Advertising and Promotion Efforts

In the online study, 46 percent indicated that they had learned about their most recent volunteer opportunity themselves, 44 percent had been asked to volunteer, and 10 percent had responded to a media or public relations campaign. Volunteers reported hearing about opportunities through “word of mouth” referrals (50 percent), religious or church affiliations (26 percent), family (22 percent), and the colleges or sororities that they attended or belonged to (19 percent).

Volunteers consistently mentioned distributing flyers or brochures on college campuses (81 percent), placing promotional materials (flyers, brochures, bulletins) at gathering places such as coffeehouses and student centers (77 percent), and using radio advertising (68 percent) as effective ways to target young women 18-29. Other media channels such as TV, magazines, Web sites, and E-mail were also mentioned as being effective. Of particular interest among 52 percent of volunteers 24-29 and 43 percent of those 18-24 were agency open house events.

Girl Scout advertising campaigns were discussed in a few of the focus groups as being highly effective in promoting volunteer opportunities and in capturing the interest of these young women.

"Girl Scouts ran a big campaign about a year ago with tons of radio spots. Every time I turned on the radio, there was a Girl Scout ad-like volunteer your time. I actually had some friends at work say that they're thinking about [volunteering for] the Girl Scouts. I heard it on the radio and I'm going to volunteer. So, I think it worked."

—**Carmen**, age 21

College Campuses

"Where I go to school, it's required that everybody has a computer. So the campus always sends out e-mail announcements. For all of the organizations, they'll send out something about the volunteer opportunities. That's how I hear about a lot of stuff, through e-mail."

—**Tia**, age 21

Employers

"Jobs. I think that's good how corporations are allowing organizations to come into the facility to ask for volunteers and to raise money. For people my age, that's really convenient because if you don't want to go outside of your job hunting for the opportunity to volunteer, they'll bring you one."

—**Carla**, age 29

Retail

"Some volunteer organizations set up a booth at the mall on weekends. You just get a pamphlet with a contact number and some dates on it. That's how I found out about a lot of stuff that I did on my own that was outside of school."

—**Tiffany**, age 21



Conclusions

Young women 18-29 welcome the many volunteer opportunities to promote a contemporary program for girls. They are ready to respond to girls nationwide who expressly asked for their involvement—as advisors, mentors, and responsible friends. They see the inherent value and benefits that such a program can offer and, in fact, many wish they had been able to participate in such a program when they were younger. This willingness to be a part of contributing to girls' healthy development presents a tremendous opportunity for Girl Scouting.

The desire to volunteer with organizations that offer flexibility, well-defined roles, training and mentoring, opportunities that match their interests, a program that addresses the substantive issues of

adolescence today, and the tools and resources necessary for success was demonstrated consistently throughout the study. Volunteers 18-29 are also committed to working with other committed and dedicated women who can in turn serve as their own advisors, mentors and responsible friends in navigating new volunteer experiences in Girl Scouting.

Above all else, the opportunity to “make a difference” is the driving force behind volunteering for women 18-29. By listening to the voices of the women in this study, and harnessing their energy and commitment, this group of volunteers can make a real difference in the lives of Girl Scouts.

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Girl Scouts of the USA
420 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10018-2798
www.girlscouts.org

